



Harold Varmus, MD
President

July 11, 2006

The Honorable Dick Durbin
United States Senate
332 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

VIA FACSIMILE: 202-228-0400

Dear Senator Durbin:

I am writing to ask for your support of efforts to make the biomedical research literature more accessible to the public that paid for the research, an issue that I believe is critical to the future health of science and the health of our nation.

Sharing of information about the latest scientific and medical advances is a key driver of further progress. Yet the results of research conducted with public funds are not being made available through a public digital library to the full extent made practical by the Internet. Congress has shown its interest in this issue in recent years by directing the NIH to propose a Public Access Policy. However, largely because the policy is voluntary, participation has been relatively low.

This experience has clearly demonstrated that a mandatory policy, calling for deposit of all articles stemming from NIH research funding, is necessary to obtain a meaningful effect. It is my hope that Congress will now direct the NIH to establish such a policy, thereby granting public access to research that the public funds.

I understand the Senate Labor/HHS Appropriations Subcommittee is currently considering the options for such action. Speaking as a former Director of NIH, president of a major cancer center (Memorial Sloan-Kettering), and a strong proponent of open access publishing, I am firmly convinced that an NIH policy requiring free availability of all NIH-funded research in PubMed Central, NIH's open online biomedical archive, within six-months of journal publication would be an important step, serving the best interests of scientific researchers and the public.

I urge that the Appropriations Committee direct NIH to make two vital revisions to the currently ineffective policy:

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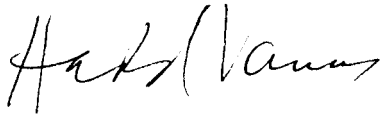
NCI-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center

1. Require that *all* NIH-funded research be made publicly available in NIH's PubMed Central online archive.
2. Limit the delay in public access to a *maximum of six months* after research is published in a peer-reviewed journal.

These actions will help ensure we take full advantage of the historic opportunity presented by the Internet to accelerate biomedical research, stimulate innovation, and leverage the public investment in NIH.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

With best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Harold Varmus". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Harold" and last name "Varmus" clearly distinguishable.

Harold Varmus, M.D.

CC: Dena Morris